

*Classic Covers*

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

**by**

Leah Honeycutt

**Thesis Advisor**  
Sam Minor

**Ball State University**  
**Muncie, Indiana**

April 2015

**Expected Graduation Date**

May 2015

Undergrad  
Thesis  
LD  
2489  
.24  
2015  
.H66

## Abstract

"Don't judge a book by its cover" is a statement we are constantly told; yet we are all guilty of. Avid readers are familiar with the known book covers of the classic novels such as *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *Moby Dick*. *Classic Covers* is a series of redesigned book covers for ten classic novels. These covers are minimalistic, hand created, and three-dimensional. They explore graphic design as it was originally created with hand cut paper and vector images. I created these book covers based on what I believed to be significant events or parts of each novel. They create what I believe to be the feel and theme for each novel.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Sam Minor, my advisor for this thesis, for not only being my advisor and professor, but also for teaching me so much about design. He has been a teacher, friend, and inspiration for four years. He has taught me the difference between good and bad design and to be proud of whom I am as a person and designer, because there is no one else like me.

I would also like to thank my mom, Kris Honeycutt, for pushing me everyday to get my degree. She has not only financed my schooling but also been my rock through everything.

I would like to thank Cody McDowell for keeping me company on these long nights in studio, giving me motivation when I had none, and believing in me when I didn't believe in myself. He has truly been a saving grace to me throughout this entire process.

## Author's Statement

*Classic Covers* is a thesis in which I designed book covers for ten classic novels. The novels I chose to create covers for were: *To Kill A Mockingbird*; *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*; *The Great Gatsby*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *Moby Dick*; *The Scarlet Letter*; *Animal Farm*; *Lord of the Flies*; *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; and *Pride and Prejudice*. Each of these novel covers is created in a minimalistic, modern style in an attempt to put a modern feel on old stories. To begin my thesis, I researched previous book covers for the novels. Gaining an understanding of what imagery other artists felt was important as well as studying any repetition in images or themes in the current book covers was an important step in accumulating a creative basis with which I could draw inspiration for my own designs. After researching the traditional covers, I decided which imagery I wanted for each of my recreations. I purchased each specific novel so that the final products would be as authentic as possible. I wanted to create pieces that appeared able to be viewed as they would be in a library or store. I also wanted the covers to be on the proper books so that once they were printed they could be put on display and viewers could look at and handle them. I began to sketch ideas of what I wanted the covers to look like. I kept a sketchbook of my ideas and even drew layouts for some of the novels; this was my planning stage of the novel covers.

After I sketched my ideas and planned out what I thought I wanted each cover to look like, I was able to transform my ideas from sketches to digital

designs. I scanned my drawings, drew new images with computer tools, and began to transform the imagery I desired into vector images. I measured each cover so that the layouts would fit each individual book properly. I was able to create the text layout as well as most imagery on the computer.

There were several images that posed a challenge when attempting to translate them to a digital format and required additional hand-done work beyond the computer. One of these nontraditional images was the letter “A” for *The Scarlet Letter*, which, once printed, I incorporated into the design by physically sewing it onto the cover.

After laying out all of the text and formats on the computer, I was able to print the covers on a laser ink jet printer. The printouts included a basic layout design of each completed cover, respectively, as well as individual images that I wanted to use for the cutouts. I hand cut each image and layered the cutouts to create the three dimensional look I desired. The hand-created cutouts gave the book covers a personal touch as well as created contrast from the mechanical look of the flat printed vector images.

After all ten covers were completed, I placed them on display in the Ball State Arts and Journalism Building display case. They were placed in the display case in the Visual Communication and Journalism department for viewing. Onlookers were able to view them through the case as well as ask interact with them. They got many comments and viewers seemed to enjoy looking at and comparing them to what they knew of the traditional covers.

## To Kill A Mockingbird

Most book covers for this novel include images of birds, trees, or children. They play off of the title of the book rather than focusing on the events. My cover depicts a tree trunk up close with a large knothole in the middle of it. I chose this design because I wanted to use an actual scene in the novel as well as play off of the older covers. I wanted people to be able to recognize the book, but for the cover to have a modern twist. One of the major incidents in the novel is that Jem and Scout, two of the novel's main characters, find small gifts inside the knothole of a tree on their street. These gifts are from a mysterious man named Boo Radley who the children are suspicious of. I believe that Boo Radley is a huge character of the novel. He plays a large role in the children's growth as individuals and also represents the goodness that society seems to overlook. This event that takes place in the novel has a huge impact on the actual story; as a result, I wanted to use this simple but profound image to initiate a wider understanding of the novel and its social commentary. I also added a vector image of a dead mocking bird to the back cover to play off of title a former cover artists have done. By placing it on the back I hoped to subtly hint at and reflect the drama and darkness that runs through the narrative of the novel itself.

## The Iliad and the Odyssey

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are a two-part Greek Tragedy in which the first novel is written to describe the journey the hero takes into war and the second is his return home. I chose not to reference a specific scene because I did not want to favor one story over the other, and so chose to create a design that focused on the larger story of the hero's journey. I wanted the stories to be read as a whole, rather than individually and so depicted a ship going across the ocean to represent that each novel is more about the journey the hero is on rather than the actual events he encounters. The ocean scene I created is meant to be ambiguous: One can view it as a treacherous storm with strong and prominent waves; or, one may view the serene colors scheme, the clear sky, and the visible ship and interpret it as a more relaxing journey. The ambiguity of this design was an intentional decision as I wanted viewer to be able to make his or her own interpretations depending on which story he or she was reading. I also wanted honor the Greek culture in which these stories were originally written and so incorporated a Greek shield icon to relate the story back to its roots as a Greek tragedy.

## The Great Gatsby

*The Great Gatsby* is a novel which is packed full of events and vivid descriptions. Because so much takes place throughout the course of the novel and the author uses so much metaphorical literary imagery, traditional covers for this particular novel are often packed with loud, brightly colored, artistic imagery. Though there were many scenes to choose from, I wanted to depict the scene that I felt most embodied the story as a whole. One image in the novel that has always struck me is that of the green light that Gatsby looks to from the end of his pier. The light comes from his dream girl Daisy's dock across the bay. This light represents everything Gatsby hopes and dreams for, including one day getting to be with Daisy. I think this embodies the underlying tone of the entire novel. The novel itself describes how Gatsby has this luxurious life and is always throwing lavish parties. He is rich and has many women who would love to be with him, and although everyone thinks he lives this amazing and wonderful life, Gatsby is never truly happy. I think this scene is when Gatsby shows his true self. In it he is vulnerable while looking at the light and it is his secret to what the light really means. Like his real life, the light may look just like a beautiful green beam to everyone else, but to him it is much more.

I wanted the light on the cover to be an actual light so that viewers could truly imagine the view as Gatsby does. I also wanted the other sides of the book to have imagery that depicted the lavish life style that Gatsby lives, hoping my

cover design would show the juxtaposition between Gatsby's outward appearance and his internal struggle as the novel depicts.



## Romeo and Juliet

Book covers for this play vary a lot. The cover imagery depict a wide range of elements from the play including roses, the characters, coffins, poison, William Shakespeare himself, or just typography. When creating this cover I had to consider what I wanted the feel of the cover to be as well as what objects or scenes I felt embodied the play. I decided that the tragedy was more about the love and death of the characters than the events that occur throughout the play. I decided that I wanted to depict the deaths that take place in the novel in a subtle way so that I would not give up the ending of the story for the viewers who hadn't read it yet, but wanted the contrast of love and death to be prominent. As a result, I depicted a rose on top a dagger; two contrasting images, which ultimately formed one mysterious uniform image. I subtly hinted at death by placing a small bottle of poison on the back cover.

## Moby Dick

Book covers for this novel all depict a whale in some way, most of the novels showing only a portion of the whale or show the whale and a ship; I wanted to be sure that both the ship and the whale were depicted on the cover. The most important part of the novel is that the fisherman becomes obsessed with catching this mysterious whale, and how the whale is much more than just an everyday whale. I wanted the viewer to think about how the whale and the fisherman are connected; as a result, I depicted the ship as a part of the whale by using the tale as the body of the ship. I also wanted the whale to be the most prominent image, as the novel is about the whale and how magnificent it is to the fisherman. I placed the whale in the waves to show that the novel takes place on the sea. I wanted the two pieces to interact, just as they do in the novel, so I made the whale/ship intertwine between waves.

## The Scarlet Letter

Most traditional covers for this novel include a large red letter “A,” because that is not only the title but the object the entire book is about. However, I wanted the “A” to be more than just a cutout. I felt that the “A” needed to actually be embroidered like the one in the novel for it to truly have an impact. I hand stitched the entire letter just as it is described in the novel. I felt that in order to understand how wearing the letter “A” made Pyrenne, the main character, feel, I had to make the book “wear” the scarlet letter as well. It not only makes the “A” more impactful, but also lets the reader feel and touch the patch as if they were able to feel the one on Pyrenne’s chest.

## Animal Farm

The book covers for this novel almost always depict the pig in some way, as the pig is the main character of the story and the pigs are the group of animals that eventually overtake the farm and join the humans. However, I wanted to add an element to my design that referred to the plot twist and would only become apparent to the viewer after having read the story. As a result, I placed a pig hoof on one inside flap and a human boot on the opposite flap. The outside is very neutral to the theme as I want the reader to know that before the start of the reformation of the farm it was just a normal farm with farm animals grazing and everything in order. It isn't until the reader actually opens the book that they get the glimpse of the true story.

## Lord of the Flies

Two objects that play major roles in the novel *Lord of the Flies* are the image of the pig head on a stick and the image of the conch shell. Both of these objects represent how the boys create order and a societal system without adults to form an institutional construct. The conch is used during their meetings to allow someone to speak their opinion while the boar's head shows how the boys are able to fend for themselves and overcome their fears. Even though the objects show how the boys are working hard to survive, they also show how naïve the boys still are. After being on the island for a while, the boys begin to fall apart, begin to think the boar head can talk, and hallucinate that there are beasts looming in the dark. Because this novel is ultimately still about children, I wanted the images to have a childlike quality, even though they represent far deeper meanings.

## The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

The scene that has always stuck out to me most in *Tom Sawyer* is the fence-painting scene in which Tom sneakily tricks his friends to paint his aunt's fence for him. One reason that this scene is so important is because it is not only comical, which is how Mark Twain is known to write, but it also shows the true personality of Tom Sawyer himself. Tom Sawyer is a lazy young boy who is constantly getting into trouble. He is witty and smart, yet doesn't use his intelligence for the right reasons. I wanted to play off of the child-like qualities of the book, which is why I added the paint can and quote on the back. I also used the bright, playful colors to get the simplistic life style in which Tom Sawyer lived.

## Pride and Prejudice

One thing that *Pride and Prejudice* represents is class and eloquence.

This is not only because of the time period the story is set in, but also, because of the style in which it is written. I wanted this sophisticated style to be presented in the book cover as well. Most traditional covers for this novel include painted portraits of the characters themselves, but with a minimalistic style I was not able to do actual portraits. As a result, I had to think outside of the box. During this time period it was common for people to have silhouette portraits done. In honor of the time period and its artistic traditions, I felt that it would be a wonderful solution to do my own silhouette portrait for the two main characters, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, rather than the actual portraits.

The novel has many turning points throughout the story. I added the opposite view of the silhouettes on the back of the cover as juxtaposition between the feelings that bring them together (apparent on the front), and the societal constructs that keep them apart. I wanted to play on the idea that Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth did not always see eye to eye and in fact actually disliked each other through most of the novel.

After doing *Classic Covers*, I have discovered a lot about myself as a designer. Not only did I broaden my design work capabilities to a new style, but I was also able to learn how to work with subtlety and limited design. These covers gave me the freedom to choose what to depict, but the constraints presented along with each novel and their respective narratives were strict enough to make me work critically in order to create a uniform piece for each book. I was able to work on a specified scale and specific requirements. To me, design has become more about the art and personal touch the designer makes to a piece rather than the design itself. I found myself enjoying these pieces more because of the time and heart I put into them and less for the style or process. Working on this thesis has made me find who I am as more than just a designer, but as an artist. I will use the skills I have learned from this process to create future pieces. These pieces gave me confidence in my hand skills as well as renewed love for design.